

AMERICAN RECORDER

Boston Early Music Festival 2013 Double Coverage

With a theme of “Youth: Genius and Folly” for the 17th biennial **Boston Early Music Festival**, the full week (June 9–16) of events showcased an opera by a youthful G. F. Handel. Early musicians,—many young, some young-at-heart—also offered fringe events at locations in the Back Bay of Boston, MA.

The festival centerpiece, offered four times, was the opera *Almira* by 19-year-old Handel. An energetic orchestra, led by concertmaster Robert Mealy (who regularly works with young early musicians in his posts at Yale University and Juilliard School of Music), powered through them all—in addition to playing on several other BEMF events plus fringe concerts.

The opera’s plot centers on Almira, who is now old enough to be crowned and take over from faithful court administrator Consalvo; an edict from her deceased father requires her to marry a son of Consalvo. She is in love with someone else, as are several members of the Spanish court of Castile—but not always or at first in reciprocal fashion; there is also one courtier who turns out not to be the peasant orphan he has seemed to be. These complications are ironed out in a humorous intrigue so that all confusion is resolved in the end.

As usual for BEMF, the singing and dancing were superb; use of gesture was also a dramatic element that was effectively utilized, sometimes to comic relief: patting of cushions, unrolling of a scroll, sweeping. English surtitles were projected above the proscenium, so that the meaning of the singing (mostly in German) was clear. The length of this work might be a challenge for the uninitiated opera audience—perhaps a lesson that an older Handel may have rectified later.

Recorders were ably taken up periodically by oboists **Kathryn Montoya** and **Gonzalo Ruiz**. Their best moments were perhaps the lyrical ones, where two altos accompanied quiet nature-related arias or interludes, sometimes forming a lovely trio with one of the singers on stage. Occasional familiar snippets of melody, sung or played either by recorders or oboes, were likely reused by Handel later in his career as arias or sonata themes, a common practice used by composers of that time.

FOLLOW LINKS TO DAILY REPORTS

**MONDAY, JUNE 10,
AND TUESDAY, JUNE 11**



**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12
AND THURSDAY, JUNE 13**



FRIDAY, JUNE 14



**SATURDAY, JUNE 15,
AND SUNDAY, JUNE 16**



**TIM BROEGE VISITS WITH NIK
TARASOV ABOUT THE ELODY**



GAIL NICKLESS, EDITOR

WITH SINCERE THANKS TO THESE VOLUNTEER REPORTERS: TIM BROEGE, LAURA CONRAD,
BONNIE KELLY, SUZANNE NIEDZIELSKA, KATHY SHERRICK AND PAM YANCO.

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Monday, June 10

The **Sitka Trio**—**Letitia Berlin**, recorders, douçaine; **Frances Blaker**, recorders; and **Shira Kammen**, strings, voice—provided an enjoyable beginning on the morning of June 10 to a week filled with recorder-inclusive fringe concerts. The trio takes its name from the beautiful coastal retreat for artists, the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology in Otis, OR. Along with their friends—**Barbara Blaker Krumdieck**, 'cello; **Erica Dunkle**, mezzo-soprano; **William Simms**, theorbo, guitar; and **David Wilson**, violin—the Trio presented “Music Outside the Lines,” an eclectic program of Medieval, Baroque and folk tunes spanning centuries.

The earliest, a rhythmically-challenging 14th-century piece from the *Robertsbridge Codex* (“Petrona”), was followed by the most contemporary: Blaker’s *Perotinian* (2006) in a section performed mostly by the Trio.

Sets alternated among varying combinations of instruments and voice and were full of lovely unison passages, intricate rhythms, and focused ensemble playing.

The full ensemble was featured in a three-part set: *Browning My Dear* (Woodcock), with Dunkle’s lovely singing; *Browning* (Bevin) with no vocal; and the melancholic *Ricercar Bonny Sweet Robin*. The entire ensemble so obviously enjoyed performing together, and merited the large and appreciative audience at Cathedral Church of St. Paul.

The noon concert at Old South Church featured **Ensemble Musica Humana** as they debuted a new program, “Turlough O’Carolan: A Life in Song.” Concert-goers filled Gordon Chapel for this celebration of the legacy of the 18th-century Irish composer and virtuoso harper. Ensemble Musica Humana featured **Lidia Chang**, flute; **Laura Osterlund**, recorder and whistle; **Joseph Finnegan Beckwith**, voice; **Rosanne Santucci**, uilleann pipes; **Nancy Hurrell**, harp; and **Tony Keegan**, percussion.

O’Carolan’s delicate, lilting melodies were presented with various combinations of instruments, many featuring the harp. The florid soprano recorder passages in *Lord Inchiquin* were beautifully played by Osterlund, accompanied by the bodhran.

Musica Humana’s delightful program was well-designed, highlighting the ensemble’s unique sound.

“La Stravaganza: Musical Brilliance in Late Renaissance Italy” was a “Special Concert of Music for Recorders, Viols and Lutes to honor the memory of Bonnie Rogers,” an amateur musician and a lover of early music. Rogers was a part of the Boston early music community for more than 30 years, serving as an officer and board member of the Boston Recorder Society and the Viola da Gamba Society of New England. She played recorders, keyboard, rackets, vielles and viols, and was also a singer.



Sitka Trio and Friends (Photo by Bonnie Kelly)



The Back Bay area of Boston, from the Duck Boat Tour. (Photo by Gail Nickless)

The ensemble—**John Tyson**, recorders and percussion, with the **El Dorado Ensemble: Carol Lewis, Janet Haas, Paul Johnson, Alice Mroszczyk, Mai-Lan Broekman**, violas da gamba; and **Olav Chris Henriksen**, archlute, theorbo—played works by Bassano, d’India, Malvezzi, Cavaliere and others.

Tyson’s agility was notable in the highly-ornamented *Ala Fontaine* by Willaert and dalla Casa. The ensemble added the voice of the low viol as Tyson’s alto recorder and Lewis’s treble viol alternated taking the lead.

The set of four pieces by Giulio Cesare Barbetta delighted the audience with unexpected pauses in *Moresca detta Il Mattaccino*, and with Tyson’s pipe and tabor performances in *Aria de Commedia* and *Balletto detto Il Bufon*. *Moresca detta le Canarie* was so well-received that the ensemble



John Tyson (r) and El Dorado play in tribute to Bonnie Rogers. (Photo by Bonnie Kelly)

ble reprised it as an encore. Rogers would have been thrilled with this program.

Scenarios for early-week BEMF concerts may include local groups at the top of their game on Monday afternoon. Others, even superb musicians with decades of experience playing concerts, encounter the perils of rolling into town on Sunday and playing a concert on Monday afternoon.

Ensemble 1729 (Mark Edwards and Matthew Hall, harpsichord; Vincent Lauzer, recorder; Joanna Marsden, traverso; Sallynee Amawat and Jiwon Kim, Baroque violin; Bennett Mahler, Baroque viola; Camille Paquette-Roy, Baroque violoncello) is a group of young musicians who met while studying at McGill University in Montréal, QC. Their publicity emphasizes their “stylish wit, sensitivity, and quicksilver changes of mood and color.” The whole ensemble began with the Vivaldi concerto that gave the concert its name, “Il Proteo o sià il Mondo al Rovascio.” Vivaldi displays the mutability of Proteus by shifting the tune among all voices, and the different textures certainly made for an interesting set of sounds.

They played a program of “Double Trouble” double concertos at First Lutheran Church—beloved of a *cappella* vocal groups for its high, vaulted ceiling that takes the sound and bounces it around until it blends. This isn’t ideal for chamber music.

The concert concluded with the Telemann *Concerto in E minor for recorder and flute*. This wasn’t as problematic as an concerto for two harpsichords heard earlier, where the “dueling” effect was lost to acoustics; the flute and the recorder do have different timbres, and one could see which one was play-

ing in solo passages. The two wind players stood next to each other, giving no stereo separation—unlike other times this concerto has been offered, with soloists at opposite sides of the stage.

It was a relief that, while most of the concert seemed to have been aiming for “stylish and elegant,” the final Presto of the Telemann was performed robustly, as though the people dancing it might have had boots on.

The **University of North Texas** faculty weren’t making any rookie mistakes about placement of performers in their evening concert at Church of the Covenant. **Paul Leenhouts’s** recorder playing took aggressive advantage of the recorder’s wider range of articulations than that enjoyed by the oboe (played by **Kathryn Montoya**) in the Telemann *Concerto in G major, TWV43-G6*.

It was, however, a surprise when Leenhouts made the announcement that **Petra Somlai** wouldn’t be able to play her planned Haydn solo sonata, because the rather small harpsichord was missing keys at both the top and the bottom of the piece’s range. As a continuo instrument, the harpsichord was fine when supported by the ’cello (**Allen Whear**), but seemed more like background music when playing solo—as in the ’cello *Sonata in D major, TWV41:D6* (Telemann), but also in a violin sonata of Bach, BWV1017, played by **Cynthia Roberts**.

The rest of the concert, including a trio sonata for recorder and violin by Telemann, was admirable Baroque chamber music, with the continuo driving the rhythm while the soloists produced beautiful lines.

Tuesday, June 11

Another day started once again with a morning concert at Cathedral Church of St. Paul. An intimate arrangement of chairs on the altar brought the audience face-to-face with performers **Claire Raphaelson**, soprano voice; **Sarah Cantor**, recorders, traverso; and **Matthew Wright**, lute. The program, “JD 450: An Intimate Celebration of John Dowland,” recognized the composer’s 450th birthday.

Although Dowland was born in England, he gained much of his fame while serving at foreign courts. The trio gathered works from Dowland’s songbooks and primary sources, containing ensemble versions of lute solos by Dowland himself and others; some arrangements were by the performers.

The opening piece, *The King of Denmark’s Galliard*, was arranged by Wright with divisions by Cantor. Wright, already seated on the altar, introduced the music, followed by Cantor’s entrance from one side, playing as she walked. Raphaelson, entering stage left, sang *Behold a wonder here*, and was joined by the lute and recorder.

Pavana Lachrymae of Jakob van Eyck was the only selection not composed by Dowland. Cantor’s alto recorder solo alternated between elegant slow sections and lively passages.

The ending began with *Come again, sweet love doth now invite* with tenor recorder divisions by Cantor. What a delightful surprise to hear all three performers on vocal lines in verse 5! The final set—an arrangement by Wright and Cantor of *Mrs. White’s Thing* (lute and soprano recorder), followed by *A shepherd in a shade his plaining made* (voice and lute) and *Round Battell Galliarde* (lute and soprano recorder)—met with well-deserved and enthusiastic applause.

Watching **Gonzalo X. Ruiz** on stage is like watching a skater moving to and fro on the ice—if any skater dressed all in black, even down to a black kerchief, and if the movement were to conduct a dozen oboists and bassoonists, the **Symphonie des Dragons**. Their Festival program, “Au gout du soldat,” explored regimental music in the Philidor Collection, commissioned of the chief music copyist for Louis XIV in the 1690s. Collected by André Philidor, the five volumes of mostly anonymous wind band pieces, almost ignored until a few decades ago, chronicle a gradual shift in the double reed band’s function from military accompaniment to concert music.

A few other instruments infiltrated the Tuesday 5 p.m. performance at Jordan Hall on the New England Conservatory (NEC) campus: guitar, theorbo, percussion (field drum plus tambourines, finger cymbals, castanets and distant chimes), Baroque flute—and recorder, played most frequently by **Kathryn Montoya**. Not all performers played all the time; variety was achieved by size and instrumentation of groups (for instance, soprano recorder with bassoon and guitar on the



A toy dragon presided over the front of the stage during *Symphonie des Dragons*. (Photos by Gail Nickless)



The Swan Boats in the Boston Public Garden have been operated by the same family for over 130 years. Originating with just a row boat and a license from the City of Boston to operate a “boat for hire” on the Garden’s lagoon, the boats are still human-powered, carrying a couple of dozen people out for a pleasant ride.

crowd-pleasing *Petit Bransle faite par Mr. Degreignis*, which segued to the full group). The bassoons had particular moments of virtuosity—especially **Dominic Teresi** and **Rachel Begley**, the last familiar to recorderists.



*Patty Thompson at the ARS table.
(Photo by Kathy Sherrick)*



*La Donna Musicale; Na'ama Lion, flute, at left
(Photo by Kathy Sherrick)*



Another sight along the Duck Boat Tour.

Wednesday, June 12

The Festival exhibition opened its doors on another rainy day, June 12, at the newly-remodeled Revere Hotel (where changes from its previous corporate guise had created a facility with no apparent links to its namesake Revere). Early shoppers made their way among nearly 100 exhibitor booths; concert-goers splashed through puddles, to be washed up at nearby churches for a busy day on the fringe.

Although the morning outside was overcast, inside Gordon Chapel at Old South Church, the atmosphere was pleasantly anticipatory as **Les Bostonades** entered the beautiful neo-Gothic performance space. Stained-glass windows and vaulted columns, matched with excellent acoustics, were the perfect setting for this 11-member ensemble.

The instrumentation—four violins, viola, cello, violone and two harpsichords—recalled the classic *Concentus Musicus* of Vienna in its early days. **Akiko Sato** is music director of the group and also harpsichordist. Leading from the first violin stand, **Asako Takeuchi** set tempos and ensured perfect ensemble on the program of solo, double and triple concertos by “Bach Father and Son” (J.S. and C.P.E.).

The real treat for recorder lovers came last, when the core group was joined by recorderists **Héloïse Degrugillier** and **Justin Godoy** for a scintillating, note-perfect performance of Bach’s *Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, BWV1049*. One’s heart briefly sank at the gathering of the full ensemble—including both cellists and both harpsichordists, with lids fully opened. Would the two alto recorders be heard—as, in so many performances, they are not?

There was nothing to fear. The slender soloists stood in front of the ensemble, well into the room. Every note was audible; balances were perfect! Tempos were brisk, and ensemble was breathtaking in its unity. Godoy sways and almost dances as he plays, while Degrugillier seems to float alongside. She provided a lovely cadenza at the end of the second movement.

Briefly interviewed after the performance, they said both their recorders are modeled after Stanesby, Jr.: Godoy’s made by Von Huene, and Degrugillier’s by French maker Henri Gohin.

It was an excellent concert, with Gordon Chapel filled with a very appreciative audience!

The persistent rain at mid-day did not prevent an enthusiastic crowd from making the trek to the African Meeting House of the Museum of African American History, where **La Donna Musicale** launched its **RumBarroco Latin-Baroque Fusion Ensemble**. The group, led by director **Laury Gutiérrez**, includes **Na’ama Lion**, flute; **Guan-Ting Liao**, violin; **Renato Malavasi**, percussion; **Janet Haas**, violone; and **Vivian Montgomery**, accordion; they were joined by singers **Camila Parias**, **Erika Vogel** and **Brad Fugate**. In a

departure from its usual focus on women composers, La Donna delighted the audience with music from Spain, Venezuela, Colombia, Puerto Rico and Argentina by composers such as Gaspar Fernandez, Ástor Piazzolla, Luisa Elena Paesano, Diana Sáez and Mateo Flecha.

Listeners experienced Sephardic, Andalusian and European works transformed by the rhythms of contemporary Latin American music, along with its African and indigenous roots in the forms of folk songs, dances, *zoropos*, *plenas*, tangos, and villancicos. Although a new effort, the well-rehearsed group pleasantly interweaved various combinations of instruments and voices.

Near the end, audience participation was requested on *Plena* by contemporary Puerto Rican composer Sáez, helping with three voice patterns. In the final number, *La Girngoza*, the capacity audience gladly “helped” provide percussion by clapping patterns along with the music—a rousing end to a concert providing a contrast to typical fringe fare.

Also not the usual fringe event was a late-afternoon jam session featuring the **Renaissance Improv Allstars** (members and friends of **Renaissomics** and **Hesperus**, notably Tina Chancey, viola da gamba, violin; John Tyson, recorders, pipe and tabor, crumhorn, violin; Miyuki Tsurutani, harpsichord, recorders). The bar was crowded at Rustic Kitchen, next door to the Revere Hotel, as listeners heard ground basses, dances, chansons and madrigals. As with the first jam session two years ago, it ended much too soon.

In the strikingly modern angular geometry of First Church Boston, youth took the stage for the third **Early Music America (EMA) Young Performers Festival (YPF)**, which had started on Monday with the **Tufts and Brandeis** combined groups featuring **Julia Bolsinger**’s recorder. Concerts twice a day showcased 10 performances, with six ensembles having been awarded EMA’s 2013 College-Level Ensemble Grants. Also including recorders and winds were Tuesday’s massive 50-member **University of North Texas Baroque Orchestra and Collegium Singers**, directed by **Paul Leenhouts**. Earlier on Wednesday, a six-piece sackbut choir played with the **Florida State Early Music Ensemble**, **Jeffery Kite-Powell**, director. What a variety of music and of hair dyes was exhibited by these young groups!

The late-afternoon Wednesday YPF offering was the **University of Southern California (USC) Thornton Baroque Sinfonia** in “La Pellegrina 1589: Music for a Magnificent Florentine Wedding.” Playing recorders were USC alumnus **Aki Nishiguchi** and faculty member **Rotem Gilbert**, with director **Adam Gilbert** on dulcian. (The previous day, after the North Texas group’s oboist had become ill, Nishiguchi played on their program as a last-minute substitute.) The rest of the 16-member group—eight singers per-



The Renaissance Improv AllStars: John Tyson (in blue, caught talking with fans afterwards) and Emily O’Brien (in red) played recorders. (Photos by Bonnie Kelly)

forming semi-staged parts, accompanied by instruments including strings and organ—are graduate students.

During an instrumental intrada, each singer arrived on stage, one-by-one from the audience, to stand in front of the instruments, assuming a pose that changed periodically like a game of Statues. Various arias invoking word painting and dances made up the rest of the 45-minute program. The recorders, from two sopranos to two tenors and combinations in between, were uniformly well-played, especially the florid SA recorders (Nishiguchi and Rotem Gilbert, respectively) in the Sinfonia of *Intermedio V, The Song of Arion*, by Cristofano Malvezzi. Nishiguchi also played soprano, as Adam Gilbert stood playing bagpipes beside masked violinist **Michkar Núñez-Mejia** scratching out a rousing devil’s fiddle (the famous saltarello *Schiarazula marazula* by Giorgio Mainerio). The group can be heard at www.youtube.com/user/USCEarlyMusic.



Luke Conklin of the Case Western Reserve University Collegium Musicum.

Thursday, June 13

The rain continued, but spirits remained high. Even before the exhibition opened, some 40 lively participants downstairs asked questions during a lecture-demonstration: **Modern Technology for Early Music**. Harpsichordist **Peter Sykes** gave tips on how to play music from an iPad—which now compares to a then-new trend of playing from photocopies only decades ago. Full scores don't take much memory space—whether scanned or from an online source. Even the most basic iPad has very good battery life (although a portable battery pack like one from Zagg is good insurance for concerts). A basic setup is the iPad, ForScore (from iTunes), plus pedals to turn pages (absolutely silently, on demand, and also in half-page segments) and a scanning app.

Sykes warned that scanning a PDF into music software may seem to be a “gift from God,” but time is spent editing and fixing errors. One new tool to help those of us who have to “cut and paste” parts from hard-copy scores is <http://partifi.org>, an automated tool that creates parts from a PDF score.

BEMF Education Director **David Coffin** next discussed his now-free app, Ace Recorder, www.davidcoffin.com/acerecorder (reviewed in the Fall 2012 *AR*). While the app is geared to younger beginners, the young-at-heart can also benefit from its features—especially the tuner, which is configured for recorders. Sensitive to the correct breath pressure, it lets a player work on breath control and its function in tuning.

Another event in EMA's YPF was up next: the **Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) Collegium Musicum**, **Debra Nagy**, director. A packed house of about 150 caused a shortage of programs for “Hélas Amour,” which featured an ensemble of graduate students singing, playing plucked or bowed stringed instruments—and two playing recorders. **Sian Ricketts** alternated singing and playing; **Luke**



Ensemble Vermillian. Frances Blaker, right. (Photo by Bonnie Kelly)

Conklin (heard earlier in the week with *Symphonie des Dragons*) played harp, recorders and douçaine; both are doctoral students in the Historical Performance Practice program, studying oboe with Nagy; both played soprano-tenor recorders.

The varied program of chansons and dance music from the *Codex Canonici* (Guillaume Dufay, Gilles Binchois and Hugo de Lantins) mixed instruments and voices. Ricketts's own arrangement of basse dances by Fontaine effectively contrasted different settings from duo to four-part,, employing two recorders plus vielles and lute.

In the cavernous sanctuary at Church of the Covenant, **Ensemble Vermillian** encouraged a very enthusiastic crowd at the Thursday noontime concert to sit as close as possible to the performers: **Frances Blaker**, recorders; **David Wilson**, violin; ably backed by a fine continuo group of **Barbara Blaker Krumdieck**, cello; **William Simms** and **Anthony Harvey**, theorbo; and **Henry Lebedinsky**, cembalo.

Ensemble Vermillian's fascinating program, entitled “Chiaroscuro: Sinfonie, Sonate & Ciaconne from the Golden Age,” was divided into three sets, each bearing the title of a painting housed at the North Carolina Museum of Art, where the group had recently played.

Bernardo Strozzi's *Portrait of a Gentleman* provided the first setting. The formal composition of the painting led the ensemble to choose formal musical structures—Ciaconna and Passacaglia. All three compositions (*Begli occhi*, Op. 3, and *L'Eraclito amoroso* by Barbara Strozzi, plus Monteverdi's *Zefiro torna e di soave accenti*) provided Blaker and Wilson with many opportunities for interplay, and to show off the agility of both recorder and violin. Recorder ornaments were beautifully rendered, including striking use of finger vibrato. The musical variations complemented the light and color within the painting.

In the second set, the group's musical response to *Madonna and Child* by Guido Reni allowed Krumdieck's artistic 'cello playing to shine in solo passages of Dario Castello's *Sonata decima*.

The final set, based on *The Bear Hunt and the Holy Family with Saint Anne* by Rubens, consisted of three works, including the finale, Buonamente's *Ballo del Gran' Duca*. To quote Blaker, "This joyous ensemble piece sums up our program, illustrating the pomp and ceremony of the Baroque era. The sister arts of painting and music were indispensable elements in the glory of the age."

This music is some of the best for mixed ensembles with recorder—brought vividly to life by this fine group, always memorable for their constant attention to one another.

The **New York Continuo Collective** is largely plucked string players accompanying singers. Aside from lutes playing the tunes, instrumental solos are inserted by a couple of people playing recorders (**Grant Herreid** and **Paul Shipper**).

Every "semester" they study a different repertory of 17th-century song; this spring it was French *Air de Cour*. The program was based around a collection of songs with lute tablature published in 1614 by Gabriel Bataille, which seem to be from a ballet depicting a quarrel between Amour and La Folie. The program was semi-staged and variously costumed: some singers wore only a hat to indicate their characters, but Venus (Kirsten Kane) wore a golden gown that was definitely not street wear. La Folie (Brittany Fowler) wore street wear, but mixed patterns and stripes in a charmingly disturbing way.

In the plot, Amour attempts to prove that he enhances human happiness, in the face of La Folie's claim that love only leads to misery. Lots of songs are sung by characters labeled "quarreling lovers," "rude lover," or "angry lover." With the dance interludes and the various moods of the lovers, it was a very diverse program. The ornamentation, both improvised and written out by the director (Herreid), also added variety.

One of the problems of running an early music group in contemporary American musical culture is that the guitar and lute players often become very skilled on their instruments without getting the ensemble experience that wind and bowed string instrument players routinely gain. The Continuo Collective is a brilliant response to this problem—and they also produce a very enjoyable show.

About 40 devoted fans braved a mid-afternoon storm to gather in Gordon Chapel at Old South Church to hear "Rumors and Hearsay" played by **PHOENIXtail**—**Beth Wenstrom**, violin; **Priscilla Smith**, oboe and recorders; **Ezra Seltzer**, violoncello; **Jeffrey Grossman**, harpsichord. Smith made ornamentation sound easy on the Presto movement of the *Sonata in G minor for recorder and basso continuo, op. 1, no. 2*



PHOENIXtail members pose at top (l to r, Jeffrey Grossman, Beth Wenstrom, Priscilla Smith and Ezra Seltzer); Priscilla Smith visits with concert-goers afterwards.

(with the capable continuo very technically active in other movements).

When in full ensemble, the presence of violinist Wenstrom was magnetic—and the balance was often better when Smith's oboe (rather than alto recorder) contributed to the group's rich sonority. The final piece, Jean-Marie Leclair's



Sights near the route of the Boston Marathon.

Deuxième recreation de musique d'une executive facile — employing Smith on oboe for the opening Chaconne, then Renaissance soprano recorder decorating the closing Viste— was well-balanced and pleasing; it drew three bows.

Later that afternoon, more friends and supporters of EMA's YPF gathered at First Church Boston to hear **Oberlin Baroque**, outstanding student instrumentalists (four violins, three viols, cello, two harpsichords, transverse flute and recorder) from Oberlin College's historical performance program (under renowned fortepianist David Breitman).

Recorderist **Zachary Good** did an especially fine job on "La François" from *Les Nations* by François Couperin. For this lovely work, the ensemble was divided antiphonally into two groups with symmetrical instrumentation: two violins, two viols, flute and harpsichord on the left; pairs of violins and viols, recorder and harpsichord on the right. The groups played together on some movements, did some on their own, or alternated on repeated sections. It was a clever way to employ all of the students.

Good played soprano recorder and what looked like a voice flute, and matched the transverse flute perfectly in the ensembles. This top-flight ensemble does great credit to its teachers and to Oberlin.

The 5 p.m. Festival concert at Jordan Hall by the **Newberry Consort** and **Exsultemus Period Vocal Ensemble** was billed as a multi-media event, which is a really good idea for this music: lots of people have studied the original 13th-century manuscript in literature class or art class or music class without any information about the rest of it. On a screen behind the performers, each piece had a picture from the manuscript, and translations of what the singers were singing. This was so much nicer for both audience and performers, rather than everyone squinting into their program books.

Many of the pictures depicted people playing instruments, and it was a little jarring when the instrumentation chosen by the performers was completely different from that in the pictures—for instance, during *Cantiga 300*, where the picture (www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cantigas/images/cantiga_11.jpg) showed two very conical bore wind instruments (not in enough detail to tell whether they had a brass mouthpiece, a reed, or a fipple) while **Tom Zajac** played a cylindrical-bore transverse flute.

The music of the *Cantigas* is vocal, but a 75-minute program without intermission really needs variety of instruments. It was nice that Newberry used vielle, rebec, lute, harp, citole, hammered dulcimer, flute, recorder, bagpipe and percussion, played by five people.

Variety was also provided by supplementing the two singers (**Ellen Hargis** and **Matthew Dean**) from the Newberry Consort with five Boston-area singers from the

a *capella* group Exultemus. Even though Hargis did the vast majority of the solo singing, dialogs occurred with another singer, and some of the more general emotions could be expressed with a choral sound. The final piece, *Cantiga 10: Rosa das Rosas*, used this sound particularly well.

The recorder was played on only one piece, but it was one of the more striking uses of instrumental accompaniment. *Cantiga 103* tells the story of a monk who asks the Virgin to show him what the bliss of heaven is like; he starts listening to a bird sing, and the next thing he knows it's 300 years later and he no longer knows anyone in the monastery. A highly improvised recorder solo (by Zajac) depicted the bird song.

Other memorable instrumentation was the quite simple castanet beat (also played by Zajac) with the *Cantiga 425: Alegria, Alegria*, about the joy the disciples felt at the Resurrection.

The Medieval notation used in the *Cantigas* is quite good at telling us what notes make up the tune, but experts differ quite a bit about the rhythms, and there aren't harmonies or instrumentations notated at all. One is tempted to conclude that the good performers of this music are actually quite good composers, and the music they're playing is 21st-century music, based on some material from the 13th century.

This concert, partly because of the immersion in the pictures and the ease of following the words—and also because of the relatively “straight” interpretations, without a lot of composed harmony and counterpoint—seemed more like a real experience from the 13th century than other Medieval concerts.

The audience gave the performance a standing ovation at the end—well-deserved, considering the commitment by the performers to this material from almost 900 years ago.



Illuminations from the Cantigas de Santa Maria manuscripts, one of the largest collections of songs from the Middle Ages.

Those interested in the Cantigas will find many resources at www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cantigas.





Chingwei Lin consults with Nik Tarasov about the electronic processing for the Elody. Read about Chingwei Lin in the January 2011 *American Recorder*, “On the Cutting Edge.”



Close-up of Emily O'Brien (with Helder tenor) and Chingwei Lin (playing the Elody) during the ARS Next Generation Concert.



Emily O'Brien (playing Mollenhauer Helder tenor) with Miyuki Tsurutani, harpsichord.

Friday, June 14

During most of yet another morning at Cathedral Church of St. Paul, the ARS reprised its **Next Generation Concert**: a series of performances by up-and-coming recorder players. As in recent years, this was an excellent opportunity to hear a cross-section of talents and styles—absolutely free.

The program was off and running with a pair of evenly matched alto players, **Emily O'Brien** and **Chingwei Lin** (both of whom have been heard in recent years on various BEMF events). From delicate ornaments, added to a *Sonata in G Minor, Op. 5/4* of Jean Baptiste Loeillet, they turned a corner for a contrasting “Mad Improv” using a Helder tenor (O'Brien) and the Mollenhauer Elody (Lin), with **Nik Tarasov** running sound. From a very convincing recorder sound to something approaching heavy metal, the Elody proved to be a dynamic instrument in the hands of someone not afraid to explore its possibilities. Hear the Improv in an excerpt posted at www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag.

O'Brien continued with the Helder tenor in a solo segment, where beautiful tone and even sound through the recorder's range was demonstrated on W. F. Bach's *Sonata in E Minor*. (The Siciliano movement of this piece can also be heard at www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag.) The instruments of the future and the players of the future met in a most engaging way in these first two vignettes.

Quilisma Consort (Melika M. Fitzhugh, Lisa Gay, Carolyn Jean Smith) offered three works by Fitzhugh—a recorder player but also a Master's student in composition at the Longy School. Cascading harmonies and quasi-minimalist sections played nicely together in her 2010 *Sicilian-ish*.

Rarely using music throughout his segment, **Martin Bernstein** entered from the rear of the cavernous space, using its resonance to good effect in a Bassano *Ricercate Quinta* played on Renaissance soprano. On Handel's *D Minor Sonata*,



Quilisma Consort (l to r, Carolyn Jean Smith, Melika M. Fitzhugh and Lisa Gay)

his crisp articulation, clean fingers, easy open tone and consistent intonation even when moving through awkward chromatics all bode well for the next generation of recorder players. Playing a low-pitch Von Huene alto (which he later bought), he demonstrated a musical maturity rare for a high school sophomore (perhaps why he has received honors including winning Piffaro's young artist competition this year and receiving an ARS scholarship).

Immediately following the concert, recorder players were invited to the cathedral's Lawrence Room for a playing session coached by **Frances Blaker**. She led the players through Purcell's *Pavan in B*, Byrd's *Who Likes to Love*, Dowland's *Sir John Souch, his galiard* and Dunstable's *O Rosa Bella*. Following the music making, players enjoyed refreshments arranged by ARS Board member **Bonnie Kelly**.

Any who did not join the playing session were faced with too many choices: multiple overlapping events, all roughly at mid-day and in not only Boston venues but Cambridge. **Sarasa Ensemble**—**Sarah Cantor**, recorders; **Jesse Irons**, violin; **Timothy Merton**, violoncello; **Matthew Hall**, harpsichord—offered "Dialogues: Trio Sonatas for Violin and Recorder." **The Alamire Consort**—**Andrea Veal**, soprano; **Melinda McMahon**, mezzo-soprano & harp; **Robert Stibler**, cornetti and recorders; **Peter Urquhart**, tenor & bass viols; **Emily Urquhart**, bass viol—examined music of two composers separated by only a generation, Antoine Busnoys and Alexander Agricola, perhaps representing respectively the end of the Medieval three-voice chanson and the beginning of newly-emerging instrumental music.

Those who went up Beacon Hill to a sweltering Friends House to hear **Duo Marchand**—**Andy Rutherford**, theorbo; **Marcia Young**, voice and harp—discovered that special guest **Ruth Cunningham** of Anonymous 4 (slated to add voice, recorders and Baroque flute) had become ill; the substitute program of duo arias and songs, also from the theatrical works of Henry Purcell and John Blow, was still enchanting (and Cunningham promises to return for the next program).

And in another installment of EMA's YPF, **McGill University Baroque Orchestra**, **Hank Knox**, director, chronicled a musical debate that raged in the 17th and 18th centuries: whose music was superior, the French or the Italian. Their program—"Les goûts réunis," or the Union of Styles—explored the French refinement and the Italian preference for melody, exhibited by Arcangelo Corelli, as well as the combination of the two styles in works such as Couperin's *La Paranasse* and Louis-Nicolas Clérambault's *Orphée*. While there were no recorders on this program, Baroque flute in the hands of **Lidia Chang** provided coloratura runs and effective contrasts to the Baroque violins and cello, supported by a harpsichord/archlute continuo and with soprano voice floating over all.



Martin Bernstein enters, processing towards the altar and playing a Bassano Ricercate Quinto.



Organizer and ARS Board member Bonnie Kelly (r) with Martin Bernstein and his parents after the Next Generation concert.



Frances Blaker leads the ARS playing session.



Martin Bernstein (l) tries out a recorder at the Wenner Flöten booth in the Exhibition.



Tom Prescott in his element—surrounded by recorders and flowers at his booth in the Exhibition.



David Bellugi and Rebecca Arkenberg paused in their very important discussion of ... food.

Saturday, June 15

It was “last call” at the exhibition—its final day, and busy with purchases mulled over during several days of busy events.

For two hours, five performers for **Paul Leenhouts’s** recorder master class offered sophisticated samples of late Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and contemporary music.

Trio Quilisma (**Melika Fitzhugh, Lisa Gay, Carolyn Jean Smith**, previously heard on the Next Generation concert) played, from memory in the dark church nave, the madrigal *Una Panthera* by Johannes Ciconia (c.1370-1412), a nationalistic piece dedicated to the town of Luca. Leenhouts suggested taking more time, and creating big spaces, such as an occasional fermata.

Mary Briggs, Brian Warnock and Hernia Yacubowiz, a trio coached by **Héloïse Degrugillier**, played *Trio in G minor* by Johannes Mattheson (1681-1764). Leenhouts reminded everyone that Mattheson was most critical of the recorder and preferred the flute, for which the piece was written. He suggested that an “at ease” Adagio tempo is much like the attitude with which one reads the newspaper with coffee in the morning.

Eileen Allen played Telemann’s second *Methodical Sonata* (1728-32), the Adagio movement, with “a very nice tone.”

Again from memory, **Martin Bernstein** played *Ricercate Quinta* by Giovanni Bassano (1585)—an ambiguous form, not at all mathematical in the way one might expect from the diminution tradition. “Play like you are a gypsy,” Leenhouts enjoined. In short, Leenhouts indicated, the audience wants “blood, sweat, and tears.” Trills are not expensive; they can be doled out generously.

Given that soprano was hardly used at the time, tenor being the norm, Leenhouts recommended that the work be played on G alto.

Angus McMullen, a student of **Larry Zukof** at the Neighborhood Music School in New Haven, CT, played *The Big Baboon* for tenor recorder (1988), composed by Leenhouts, then of the Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet. Leenhouts commented on Angus’s “nice accents” and helped him shape the line very specifically for the remainder of the lesson, as only the composer could do.

Leenhouts’s guidance was as much that of artistic stage director as that of recorder teacher, conductor and composer. Ensembles were directed to position themselves closer to the audience, while a bit distant from each other, to encourage more respect for the performers and the music. He suggested that artistic movement should come from the action of the hands and fingers—the “through line” of playing, so to speak, rather than the tangents of neck and shoulders.

In several instances, Leenhouts indicated that tempi taken by performers were too fast. The recorder can speak so

well—especially the soprano, compared to bassoon, for instance—that the music can come out too fast. Then the contrasts of which the recorder is capable are lost. What can pressure a performer towards a faster tempo is an anxiety about avoiding empty spaces created by playing too many notes short or not knowing what to do while “out on a limb” with long notes. With vocal pieces especially, he indicated, there is a danger of playing too many short notes staccato. Aim for the more connected line.

Perhaps most instructive about his approach were the choices Leenhouts presented to each performer. It seemed he could offer a decision tree for every note one played, and probably the rests as well. For example, he mentioned three different ways to start: breath, motion or lift small finger, focusing on what is more subtle for the audience. Or he gave three different ways of stopping a note: on its head, letting it go, stopping the breath. Perhaps most critical, he mentioned three different choices as to what to put first: one’s self, the instrument, or the music.

There are few recorders in the Greek, Ottoman, Sephardic and Armenian traditions, represented by Dimitrie Cantemir’s *The Book of the Science of Music* and explored by **Hesperion XXI**, led by legendary **Jordi Savall** (who also played vielle and lyre). But the recorder’s cousin, the *ney*, and a more distant relative, the *duduk*, were virtuosically played by Armenian ensemble member **Haïg Sarikouyoumdjian**. Others in the international group hailed from Turkey, Greece, Morocco and Spain, playing ouds, percussion (from dumbek to tambourine, claves to camel bells), *kanun* and *santur*.

Soft-spoken like the recorder, the *ney* is longer (they come in various pitches) and played more flat-fingered. About the length of a soprano recorder, but with a double reed, the *duduk* has a sound somewhere between an oboe d’amour and tenor saxophone, with a constant drone—the sound of a mournful muezzin call, as used effectively on the Ottoman lament *Hisar Agir Simai*, opening the program’s second half.

A packed house at NEC seemed occasionally uncertain during the mid-afternoon concert as to when to applaud between selections—but they were certain by the end, when a standing ovation produced two bows and an encore. In addition to Savall, the audience clearly appreciated Sarikouyoumdjian and his contributions to a group with a tight sense of ensemble, even in improvisatory sections.

Passamezzo Moderno’s program, “Sinfoniae Romanae: 17th Century Instrumental Music From Rome,” was presented later that afternoon at the Boston Conservatory theater. Its members included **Jonathon Davis**, harpsichord; **David Granger**, dulcian; **Edwin Huizinga**, violin; and **Adrian Post**, violin.



Close-up of the stage ornamentation at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall.



Hesperion XXI; at right, warming up on ney, is Haïg Sarikouyoumdjian



Hesperion XXI acknowledging applause.



A standing ovation for the BEMF chamber operas.



Martina Bley (l) of Edition Baroque talking with Martin Wenner and a Wenner staffer in the Exhibition.



The friendly folks at the ARS table: Patty Thompson (l) and Kathy Sherrick. Can you tell them apart?

This dynamic West Coast group dove right into each piece, taking risks and providing exciting interpretations. Passamezzo Moderno's tight ensemble playing showed off their wonderful attention to detail.

Huizinga literally danced to the music as he attacked his violin, playing with passion. Post displayed equal virtuosity and beautiful form. The dulcian had lovely tone under the delicate touch of Granger, and Davis was the glue holding it all together on the harpsichord. While the two violins garnered most of the solos, the dulcian was quite prominent, often playing a highly-ornamented bass line.

The full ensemble pieces really let each of the performers have a moment to shine, and the four performers were heard in a variety of combinations. Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Canzona 6* paired the harpsichord with the dulcian as the solo instrument. It was beautifully performed and highlighted the dulcian's versatility. Granger's performance demonstrated the dulcian's power and agility.

Allesandro Stradella's *Sonata in C Major*, for two violins and harpsichord, was a high point in the concert. The seamless interplay between the strings in their sparkling performance was delightful.

For those not quite ready for a full opera, the **Saturday night chamber opera double bill** was just the ticket at BEMF: Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (The Descent of Orpheus to the Underworld) and *La Couronne de Fleurs* (The Crown of Flowers), cleverly presented as a play within a play. *Orphée* is inserted as an entry in a poetic contest that is part of the action of *La Couronne*. This was a common device of the time, used by Molière and others of Charpentier's contemporaries—and it also naturally incorporates the opinion that *Orphée* was not finished; it implies a third act, with the tragedy of Orpheus looking back and losing Eurydice yet again. (The mechanism for halting the dramatic action of *Orphée* is a character who orders the stop of a poetic contest being held by the goddess of flowers, along with her shepherds and shepherdesses. The interloper is none other than Jean-Baptiste Lully—like Charpentier, a court musician for Louis XIV—who limps on with his walking stick, or perhaps the long conducting staff with which he pierced his foot and caused the gangrene that was his end.)

Recorders were at the court of Louis XIV, notably taught and played by Etienne Loulié. Extracted from the personnel of the earlier *Almira* orchestra (some singers also did double duty in the Handel, as well as dual roles in the Charpentier), the orchestra of this set of chamber operas also included recorders, again played by **Gonzalo Ruiz** and **Kathryn Montoya** when not playing oboes. The orchestra was onstage of Jordan Hall, ringed in flowers, as the action blossomed all around it. Soprano recorders serenaded dancers

preparing for the wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice. Alto and tenor recorders played with the full orchestra as the pair of lovers made their ascent through the audience and out of the underworld.

Particularly effective was the addition in the second half of two gambas, allowing for gamba trios with theorbo and harpsichord, to provide dark accompaniment for Orpheus's "mournful strains" in the underworld after learning of the tragic death of Eurydice.

Sunday, June 16

The stellar mid-day Sunday performance at NEC's Jordan Hall featured **The Royal Wind Music**, directed by **Paul Leenhouts**. What a treat for recorder fans! The stage was filled with recorders of all sizes—from the tiny soprano to the mighty subcontra bass—and the audience was filled with recorder players from all around the country.

The program, "Angeli, Zingare E Pastore: Symbols and Allegories in Italian Renaissance Music," showcased the music of 17 composers and offered many combinations of recorders. Remarkably, the 13 performers played the entire program from memory, allowing them to focus on interpretation and ensemble. Leenhouts made all of the arrangements and diminutions for the concert. He conducted the full ensemble pieces, while on others, he played in smaller groups.

The Royal Wind Music displayed virtuosic skills as an ensemble, along with attention to detail and near-perfect intonation. The full ensemble pieces had a massive organ-like sound that highlighted their beautiful blend. Clear articulations were on display along with thoughtful phrasing. From the slow, flowing *Diligam te Domine* by Ascanio Trombetti to the playful Frescobaldi *Ricercar ottavo*, this was a delightful afternoon of Italian music for the recorder that transported the audience to new heights.

The afternoon ended with a standing ovation from the appreciative crowd. For most recorder players, it was also the end of a Festival dedicated to youth and free of folly. Plan now for the next **Boston Early Music Festival & Exhibition: June 7-14, 2015**, www.bemf.org.



One if by Land, Two if by Sea.

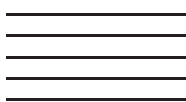


More Boston sights.



ON THE CUTTING EDGE

A Visit with Nik Tarasov



By Tim Broege, timbroege@aol.com



Tim Broege (l, above) discusses the Elody with Ben Dunham, former American Recorder editor and now Early Music America editor (while Paul Leenhouts visits with Patty Thompson at the ARS table, behind).

Tim Broege (below left) talks with Nik Tarasov (below right) about the Elody recorder.



Among the touted features of the biennial **Boston Early Music Festival** is the Exhibition. This is a trade show featuring the wares of various publishers, instrument makers, software providers and retailers. A favorite area to visit during this year's festival was the **Mollenhauer Recorders** booth, where a generous number of recorders from the extensive Mollenhauer line are displayed and available for playing.

I had the great pleasure of visiting the booth and spending time with **Nik Tarasov**, the designer of something quite new and exciting in the recorder world: the **Elody** recorder. This new instrument is described in the Mollenhauer promotional brochure as “an instrument akin to the Modern Harmonic Alto recorder with an innovative, cool design, strong tone, and built-in adaptation” as an electric recorder.

Tarasov explained that the prototype of this recorder was developed four years ago, and the instrument has been on the market for several months. I spent some time playing and examining several Elody models, and can attest to the accuracy of the promotional language.

The recorder does not look like a traditional alto, since it is not round. It has a tapered triangular shape, with real edges, although the interior bore is cylindrical. The body of the instrument is not turned on a lathe, but assembled and shaped using fine cabinetry techniques.

A dozen decorative patterns are available for the Elody. Tarasov explained that he wanted a totally new look for this recorder, in order to catch the eye of non-traditional players such as rock and pop music fans, as well as of children. The decorative finishes are hand-painted and quite striking.

I played one of the recorders with the “Dark” finish, featuring shadowy colors and two pairs of staring eyes made from imitation diamonds (zircons) mounted on the body. I also tried one with the “Lovely” finish, featuring delicate colors and butterflies.

Perhaps most striking is the “Space” design, depicting a starry sky against a night-blue background with a metallic gloss varnish. Imitation diamonds again add to the visual effect. In coming years, Tarasov expects additional color schemes to be added, as well as the possibility of custom designs if requested.

I can describe the timbre as strong and flute-like. ... Response is excellent, tuning is first-rate, and the recorder is delightful to play in purely acoustic mode. ... But the real fun starts when you “plug it in.”

Quite candidly, Tarasov admitted that he has always dreamed of playing recorder with a heavy metal rock band (some of his favorite music) and he wanted a recorder that would look appropriate in such a setting.

This is all well and good, but the ultimate questions are how it sounds and how it works. After playing the Elody instruments for a while, I can describe the timbre as strong and flute-like. The recorders have roller keys for F[♯] and G[♯] plus an extra roller key for low E (!). Tarasov wanted the recorder to match the pitch of the lowest guitar string (so important in heavy metal rock).

As a modern harmonic recorder, the Elody has a third octave using special fingerings. Response is excellent, tuning is first-rate, and the recorder is delightful to play in purely acoustic mode (completely unplugged).

But the real fun starts when you “plug it in.” Elody has a built-in pickup, with a mini-jack to standard guitar (RCA) jack cable. The cable is plugged into a mini-jack receptacle in the head joint. The guitar jack can be plugged into an amplifier, sound processor, MIDI keyboard or any device that can receive the plug.

At the Mollenhauer booth, a rock-guitar-style special effects box was provided with sounds controlled by pedals. I tried the sequencer effect, creating layers of sounds from a simple repeated pattern; the octave doubling effect, allowing me to play with both an octave above and octave below the note I was fingering; the super “fuzz tone” effect that turned what I was playing into rock guitar sound; and a magical percussion effect that added a drum-like initial attack to what I played (reminiscent of some of the classic Hammond B-3 organ sounds).

This was great fun, indeed. I detected no distortion in the sound (listening through headphones as I played); a “straight” recorder tone can also be amplified to balance with horns, strings or other amplified instruments.

At last, the recorder can take its place in any of today’s mixed ensembles—jazz, pop, rock, contemporary—without fear of being drowned out. Production of other sizes of Elody recorders is not contemplated—not only because of the three-octave range, but also because lower ranges can be produced through sound processing.

Essentially handmade and custom-designed, like any fine custom instrument, the Elody is not inexpensive.



Young and old tried the Elody, under the smiling guidance of Nik Tarasov (l, next page).





Whether the new versatility the instrument offers is worth the price is up to the individual considering a purchase.

I have no doubt young people will love it, and I already can foresee plenty of use for it in the worlds of jazz and film music. I urge recorder lovers to give it a try: Elody may truly be the “next big thing” in the recorder world.

Hats off to Nik Tarasov and Mollenhauer for this exciting new product. For information and sound samples, visit www.elody-flute.com. Hear the Elody played in a live performance by Chingwei Lin in an excerpt at www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag.



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